PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings once again from Ontario. I have recently returned from a trip with my wife to Lancaster, PA, where the American Topical Association was holding their annual show from June 21st to 23rd. Having been an ATA member for 42 years, I have seen a lot of changes in both the running of that organization and the exhibits that have appeared at the show over the years. Early exhibits that I observed bore titles such as "Flowers on Stamps," with rows of pretty pictures that were obviously "topical" in nature. In San Antonio in 1983, I was "pressed" into joining the judging panel when one of the panel members reported in sick! Among the exhibits was a wonderful display of U.S. Columbians and an exhibit of precancels, which I was told had both been placed in a special category, since they were not "topical." Among the other exhibits was one on "Hollywood," a Display Class exhibit years ahead of its time, and some "thematic" exhibits among the "topical." At the critique (now called 'feedback forum'), I managed not to disgrace myself and the whole thing was a valuable learning experience.

In the years since then, when I served on the Board of Directors, the term "thematic" took on a whole new meaning under the tutelage of exhibitors such as Mary Ann Owens and George Guzzio and the exhibits at shows rapidly improved. Then the Display class was discussed (and barred for at least one year), followed by Postcards (which could not possibly be shown thematically???). The recent show, of course, displayed examples of almost all exhibit classes, each demonstrating the fact that any philatelic (and some non-philatelic) exhibits could be shown "thematically."

In the March/April "Topical Time" journal of the ATA, on page 73, Darrell Ertzberger wrote a piece titled "Topical Exhibiting is Dead," in which he expands the differences between "topical" and "thematic" and it is well worth reading. I have several "topical" collections: butterflies & moths; beetles; ants, bees, and wasps; and almost every insect that has appeared on a stamp. In some ways, this satisfies the "scientist" in me that enjoys making corrections in the depiction of the subject of the stamps. However, when I start to put together an exhibit, it includes much material other than stamps that might have anything to do with illustrating "entomology and man," which is, in effect, my theme.

The May/June issue of the ATA journal, on page 6, has the ATA President, Jack André Denys, asking the question "why not the American Thematic Association?" I immediately thought of a comment frequently used by John McEnroe, of tennis fame, namely "you can not be serious!" However, he then expands on the question and comes up with many cogent reasons for **not** changing the title of the association. Again, this article is well worth reading.

Until next time… *Alan J. Hanks*